DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 212 UD 026 871

AUTHOR Pugh, Wesley C.
TITLE An Urban American Perspective on School Effectiveness: Research, Policy and Future Directions.
INSTITUTION Philadelphia School District, Pa. Office of Research and Evaluation.
PUB DATE Jan 89
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Congress for School Effectiveness (2nd, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, January 4-6, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Educational Improvement; *Educational Policy; *Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Expectation; Resource Allocation; *School Effectiveness; *Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS Philadelphia School District PA

ABSTRACT

The school effectiveness experiences of urban public school systems in America serve as a pivotal means of developing understanding of the potential for success inherent in school improvement strategies. The school effectiveness movement began in the mid-1960s with researchers such as Coleman, Jencks, and Jensen. Aggregated quantitative data analysis was conducted on a large scale using indicators such as family background and socioeconomic status. In the 1970s the research became more qualitative. Presently administrators and management styles are the targets of research. There are new suggestions for the reallocation of federal programs and funds. A case study of Philadelphia Public Schools is presented to show the general direction of the effective schools movement over the past three decades. The future directions of school improvement initiatives in major urban districts are discussed based on an analysis of recent research findings which have indicated inconclusive results related to the implementation of school effectiveness strategies. America's public schools are facing the end of the effective schools movement. In the absence of demonstrated success, expectations of public education may have to be adjusted. A 42-item list of references is included. (VM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

6/9/89

ED309212

An Urban American Perspective On School Effectiveness: Research, Policy and Future Directions

Wesley C. Pugh, Ph.D.
Office of Research & Evaluation
Policy Research
School District of Philadelphia
(Pennsylvania, U.S.A.)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Wesley C. Pugh
School District of Philadelphia, PA

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

(Paper presented at the International Congress for School Effectiveness, Second Annual Conference, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, January 4-6, 1989. The research and views expressed in this paper are the author's own, and do not reflect the policy or position of the School District of Philadelphia.)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UD 026 871

ABSTRACT

AN URBAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS:
Research, Policy and Future Directions

Wesley C. Pugh, Ph.D.
Policy Researcher
School District of Philadelphia
(Room 404 - Office of Research)
21st & Parkway
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103 U.S.A.
(215) 299-7990

The school effectiveness experiences, of urban public school systems, in America serve as a pivotal means of developing understanding of the potential for success inherent in school improvement strategies. This study utilizes a microanalysis approach, i.e., a case study of a "typical" large urban public school system, to provide a generalizable perspective on America's urban public education direction, and school effectiveness strategies.

The future directions of school improvement initiatives in major American urban public schools are discussed, based on an analysis of recent research findings which have indicated inconclusive (and at times negative) results related to the implementation of school effectiveness strategies.

In response to the "limited success" that urban public schools may have had with previously attempted initiatives, the recent focus is on reallocation of resources, e.g., Chapter 1 (federally funded) programs and money, along with an emphasis on both comprehensive and supplementary services to students and parents. Such programs are the latest and the most significant attempts to implement and ultimately legitimize school effectiveness research, i.e., translate the theory into a practical (and successful) paradigm.

This study focuses on one major urban public school system in America, and describes/analyzes the future policy directions of school improvement programs. This study draws on current research and evaluation findings in the literature and in major urban public school systems. The chief concluding finding of this study is that America's urban public schools are perhaps facing the final frontier in the school effectiveness movement. In the absence of demonstrative success within the present and future array of school improvement programs, America may have to adjust its expectations of public education.

AN URBAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS: RESEARCH, POLICY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Introduction

The central focus of this study is urban American public school improvement programs. The objective of the study is to synthesize the experiences in school effectiveness-related projects that have occurred in many of America's major urban public school settings. As an outgrowth of this objective and study's focus, issues associated with research/evaluation and school effectiveness/school improvement projects will be discussed.

This study will present an overview of the school effectiveness/school improvement movement in America. Afterwards, a case study of a "typical" major American urban public school system will be presented. This microanalysis will examine the development of improvement programs, and illustrate issues associated with the implementation process. A presentation of the results obtained from one school improvement program which was implemented in a major urban public school system will be discussed, along with a perspective on findings from other urban public schools. This study concludes with policy implications/recommendations, and a discussion of the future direction of school effectiveness/school improvement programs in the American public school system.

It should be noted that unlike urban public schools, suburban public schools in America - located outside of urban centers, while attentive to school improvement issues and the tenets of school effectiveness are distinguishable from urban public schools in a variety of ways: (a) the typical suburban public school tax base provides a greater financial infusion into the schools than occurs in urban locales;

(b) the pupil population in suburbia is typically predominantly white, and the diverse socio-economic class status found in urban areas is usually not prevalent in many suburban public schools; and, (c) while suburban public schools are not without problems similar to urban schools, the large and diverse student populations in urban areas constitute an inherent problem that is consistently a central focus of national and state initiatives. Such initiatives are associated with funding to implement and/or support school improvement projects, specifically Chapter 1 - federal and state government expenditures aimed at the so-called economically disadvantaged student.

Historical Overview: School Effectiveness/School Improvement

Kliebard (1987) writing on the history and development of the American school curriculum suggests the following metaphor:

> Curriculum fashions...might best be seen as a stream of several currents, one stronger than others. None ever completely dries up...(p. 208)

Similarly, the brief history of urban American school improvement programs, which derive from the school effectiveness research, can be descriptively captured in metaphoric language: Beginning in the mid-1960's an oceanic wave soaked the mindset of most Americans. Those out at sea who were responsible for the wave were researchers living on yachts, that docked in serene waters or in marinas, owned by Coleman, et al., (1966); Jencks (1966); and Jensen (1969). Moynihan (1965) and other national policy formulators were also aboard. This initial wave, known as school effectiveness, moved across America with the rapidity of a monsoon rain, and was unavoidable unless one was secure in an appropriate shelter. The emotional and intellectual turmoil that ensued from the school effectiveness wave embodied outrage, and charges of racism. If an individual was properly sheltered, the dampening effects, though not drenching, penetrated one's subconsciousness. The wave was viewed by some as educational genocide directed at the poor - especially Black Americans.

For many Americans living on shore, the wave reached them while they basked in the decade of opulence from America's increased economic growth. War abroad (the Vietnam era) divided the country, and successfully diluted the focus on emerging educational policy and related issues. The remnants from the initial wave were nurtured by subsequent currents-trends, that followed.

School effectiveness research began by utilizing large scale aggregate quantitative data analysis. It was as if those out at sea obseved the millions of children on shore to be grains of sand. The yacht dwellers were unable to understand. They lacked an interest in the uniqueness embodied in each particle. All the grains that either appeared Black, or were located on a particular section of the shore, e.g., the low income urban areas, were collectively analyzed. Utilizing sampling theory, researchers determined that unless the grains were scattered and became specks amidst the adjacent shoreline of the white well-kept coastal region, there was little hope for development. According to the subsequent experimental studies and analyses, no amount of increased effort to cultivate the colored grains of sand would be successful. It was suggested that these grains of sand under study were different due to reasons related to either geology, African heritage, American history, or because of their physical location.

Beginning in the 1960's, low income family background (low socio-economic status - ses), became the rationale for why inner-city children in America's urban public schools could not learn. By the time the initial wave moved back out to sea, its wetness stained the conscious of American society. Subsequent currents began to impact upon the shoreline. Few individuals felt the wind of Weber's (1971) sail. Years later, captained by Edmonds (1979), an anchored ship produced an under-current at sea which developed into a rising tide.

Beginning in the late 1970's, school effectiveness research shifted to a qualitative approach. Researchers began to look at the individual grains of sand and discovered a unique glow. Further analysis revealed that with proper care and cultivation, the grains were a valuable natural resource, and helped to protect the shore from erosion.

Following such discoveries, improvement efforts were undertaken to change those land sites which were neglected by the 1960's developers. Although some researchers proposed a level of development comparable to the clean, safe and orderly white sections of the shoreline, improvement often meant preventing further erosion in the previously neglected areas.

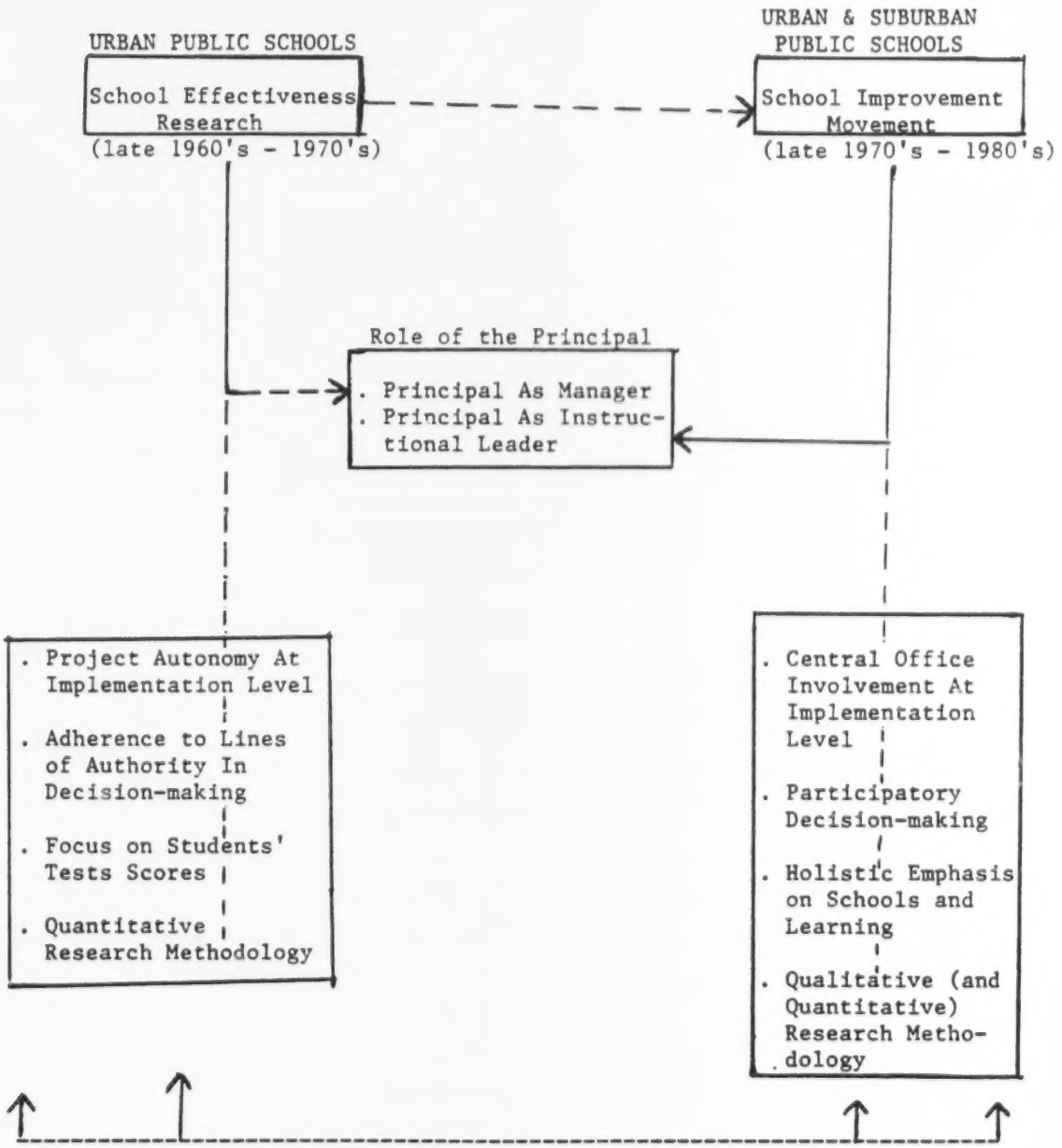
Presently, school improvement research suggests that if the principal gets into the water, or walks the shoreline and appreciates the natural beauty of the sands, others will follow. Some principals, "water-walkers", are seen as exceptional cases that embody instructional leadership qualities. Their influence on others is pronounced. Today's research also suggests that principals need not always lead the way. It is possible for teams or groups to walk the shoreline together. Some educators may desire not to walk the sandy terrain or get into the water, but if they enjoy the beach, and realize the beauty of the undeveloped shore, a consciousness and climate of growth will prevail; and amidst the shoreline, students like multicolored sands will sparkle.

The above depiction represents the essence of a comprehensive research literature review. It captures the first phase of the school effectiveness movement (1960's-1970's) as a dynamic wave which swept across America. It describes the features and impact associated with the wave, while indicating the currents which followed to produce the second phase of the school effectiveness movement (1970's-1980's). Within this second wave, the school effectiveness' research focus shifted. In addition, the undercurrent of school improvement programs developed. The role of the principal as an instructional leader became a significant focus in school improvement initiatives. In the schematic depiction to follow, the issues that relate to instructional leadership and the development of the present school improvement movement are detailed. The diagram, figure 1., also suggests that school districts' central administration offices have taken the initiative in implementing many improvement projects. The establishment of School Improvement Councils at the school building level has provided for staff participation and an increased sense of project ownership. The holistic focus of the school improvement movement is on child-school-community along with variables related to the student's self-image, test scores,

attendance, and creative expression. These are some of the characteristics of today's school improvement educational movement in public schools. All of these features are impacted upon by the organizational structure that exists at the school and district-central administration levels. (A more detailed treatment of the history of school effectiveness and school improvement can be found in Miller, 1983; or Pugh, 1986.)

Figure 1.

A SCHEMATIC DEPICTION OF A LITERATURE REVIEW ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (1960's-1980's)


URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Effectiveness Research
(late 1960's - 1970's)
URBAN & SUBURBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Improvement Movement
(late 1970's - 1980's)
Role of the Principal
. Principal As Manager
. Principal As Instructional Leader
. Project Autonomy At Implementation Level
. Adherence to Lines of Authority In Decision-making
. Focus on Students' Tests Scores
. Quantitative Research Methodology
. Central Office Involvement At Implementation Level
. Participatory Decision-making
. Holistic Emphasis on Schools and Learning
. Qualitative (and Quantitative) Research Methodology
Impact of the organizational structure

Volumes have been devoted to an analysis and discussion of school effectiveness and school improvement-related research issues (see e.g., Harvard Educational Review, 1973; International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 1988; and, Teachers College Record, 1984). Among the most common themes that have emerged are: (a) there is suspicion about the tenets of school effectiveness, especially the validity of instructional leadership and participatory management, i.e., teacher empowerment; and, (b) a debate over quantitative v.s. qualitative research methodologies to evaluate programs has occurred, only to be resolved by theoretical as well as practical attempts at data triangulation (Jick, 1979; Kidder & Fine, 1987). While "academic" debates continue to rage at educational conferences and within the ivory towers of university settings, practitioners have utilized the school effectiveness research to develop tailor-made programs for their specific school districts.

The previous discussion highlights the history and significance of the school effectiveness movement and its impact on the American educational establishment, as well as on the public mindset which was influenced by educational policy (generated by politicians in the nation's capital.) The case study to follow examines a large urban public school system, and its responses to the school effectiveness/school improvement movement. The school system that will be analyzed typifies the American urban public school educational experience, except for a few idiosyncratic differences which do not detract from the generalizable nature of the study.

Case Study - Philadelphia Public Schools

The setting for this study is a major city in the Northeast United States. According to 1980 census data, the population of this urban area is approximately 1,688,000 people. Whites comprise 58% of the total population. Blacks are 38% of the total population, and Hispanics, Asian-Americans and Others make up 4% (U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1982-1983; School District Office of Affirmative Action, 1982). A demographic breakdown of the public school

system in this locale illustrates the following:

- Total student population = 202,469
- Whites = 52,148 (25.8%); Hispanics = 17,043 (8.4%);
  Asians and Others - 4,989 (2.4%);
  Blacks - 128,289 (63.4%).
- There are 257 schools in the system:
  27 senior high schools;
  6 vocational or skill centers;
  23 junior high schools;
  13 middle schools;
  13 special education schools;
  and, 175 elementary schools.

(In 1988 the district had converted nearly all the junior high schools, grades 7-9, into middle schools, grades 5/6-8, in an attempt to increase students' educational achievement; School District Administrative Survey Data, 1984; 1988). The superintendent in the third year as chief administrator of the system, in contrast to the preceding seven years under the former superintendent, instituted numerous change initiatives. The previous administration was characterized by the media as a politically responsive entity, i.e., a patronage employer. Teacher strikes, and separate maintenance workers' walkouts were held in three of the seven years under the former superintendent. In spite of labor unrest, and a generally acknowledged work climate of low morale, student gains on achievement tests were claimed by the previous administration. Although subject to various interpretations, for years the overall health of this public school district was regarded by many observers as debilitated. Public school desegregation and related matters, e.g., the fear of busing, school desegregation pairing, state imposed desegregation attempts, etc., exacerbated the potential for further disruptions in the system. Along with a continual drop in the student population, especially Whites or students of parents who could afford to send their children elsewhere, this public school system was perceived as being on the decline.

Amidst a school climate of fiscal instability, public misgivings, and employees' general apprehension, the city government (mayor and city council) initiated changes that recast the composition of the Board of Education - the governing body of the school district. The appointment of a number of new board members who stressed professionalism and fiscal responsibility led to the buy-out of the former superintendent's contract. After political maneuvering that is rarely acknowledged to exist but is commonplace in education, the present superintendent was appointed. The appointment was the result of a national search which was conducted by an independent panel sanctioned by the Board of Education.

In contrast to the former superintendent, the new school chief established an agenda that highlighted central office administrative reorganization, a definitive mission and philosophy oriented to students, and a professionalism that illustrated familiarity with educational research and practice. Equipped with an indepth knowledge of the system, the present superintendent began to initiate policy and programs that were geared toward altering, and possibly changing, the practices associated with previous administrations.

The urban public school district in which this study took place implemented, or proposed instituting, the following initiatives for the 1984-1985 academic school year:

1. At 10 "low achieving" schools, a specific School Improvement Plan would be implemented. In the two successive years, 10 additional schools would be selected in each year to join the original cohort.

2. A new systemwide testing program was to be implemented.

3. A standardized curriculum was formally introduced, and was to be implemented and evaluated-monitored at schools throughout the district.

4. School improvement planning by principals and staff was to be given greater emphasis.

5. The school district's desegregation policy, as part of the school improvement initiative, was to be implemented and carried-out as a systemwide initiative for the second year.

6. A consistent systemwide promotion policy was to be established and implemented with a complementary remediation program.

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) was concentrated at the elementary level. The School District's desegregation policy was framed within the SIP. The apparent objective of the policy decisions was to improve schools in order to attract transfers for desegregation, as well as to ensure that "low achieving" schools were given additional resources to improve the quality of instruction. The SIP signaled a pronounced commitment to a major segment of the school population, i.e., Blacks and Hispanics.

The major stages of evolution in the School Improvement Plan were to be: (1) Introduction of the program and assessment of staffs' understanding of the goal(s); (2) Assessment of school climate variables; and, (3) Collective discussions and proposals for action by school building improvement councils that meet with central administration staff to formulate plans, and strategy, i.e., methods and tactics to meet the established goals.

Most of the resources were in the form of technical assistance and personnel. The technology chosen for the program involved what was perceived as expert intervention, and research on the "problems" that existed in the milieu. Both program funds and personnel resources were allocated on an entitlement basis. Theoretically, all the schools were to be given equal access and exposure to the expertise of the central office staffs. The available funds for materials and supplies were to be equally distributed, along with a concentration on improving the physical structure of the schools. The program was funded by a foundation grant for the initial three year period. The school district's Chapter I (compensatory education) funds were to be used to complement the program and provide for the purchase of texts and other materials and supplies. Staff involvement at both the central administration level and school level was the chief resource.

The SIP operated through executive (superintendent's) order, sanctioned by the public school service policy body, the Board of Education.

The funding level was approximately $3,027,000. per year. Of this total, $540,000. per year came from a foundation grant. The remaining funding was the result of federal monies (Chapter I), $2,400.000., and school district operating funds, $87,000. The school district established a centralized funding procedure, and required the administration of the program to operate within the bureaucracy. The superintendent and cabinet were on one level, the central administrative offices another level, and the school comprised the "field level" - client services and activity. District offices which operated in the seven administrative units of the system, were not significant; i.e., in relation to this study, the seven district offices are not directly involved in the implementation process of the SIP.

The school district's research office proposed assessing performance output and outcomes utilizing survey instruments, test scores, and a qualitative research methodology, e.g., ethnography. The school district's SIP proposal highlighted the eclectric nature of the district's school improvement plan through the following goals: The district's SIP was to draw from a variety of existing program models that were in operation within the district, e.g., parent involvement (parent scholars) programs; affective education which emphasizes student self-concept and mastery learning. In addition, the SIP derived from the school effectiveness research and focused on:

(1) A school climate conducive to learning.
(2) A schoolwide emphasis on basic skills.
(3) A system of clear instructional objectives for monitoring and assessing students' performance.
(4) A school principal as a strong program leader.
(5) A schoolwide approach; local initiative for self-improvement; and parent training, involvement and participation in decision-making.

(School District's SIP Proposal, 1983, pp.3-4)

According to the district's goal statement (SIP Proposal, 1983, pp. 10-11): "Over a three year period, the goal will be to assist low achieving schools to incorporate the essential elements of school

effectiveness, identified above, through intensive training for reshaping schools through the replication and integration of program components that have proved successful. A network of school-based facilitators, and a series of program support incentives will be responsible for supporting this retooling and reshaping effort."

The distict's SIP proposal indicated that participation in the program would be voluntary; however, all schools selected were to meet the following criteria:

(1) Consistently performed poorly on standardized achievement tests, and other objective measures of school performance.

(2) Have many of the following characteristics:
   (a) high mobility of student enrollment
   (b) racially/culturally isolated student body
   (c) high percentage of economically disadvantaged students
   (d) recipients of previous efforts at remediation, but never has a voluntary whole school approach been used.

(3) Each school will have a significant degree of flexibility in deciding how to achieve the overall goal of the project; however, each school will agree to incorporate five basic features into its overall plan:
   (a) Use of the district's mandated curriculum in all curriculum areas.
   (b) Monitoring of student performance in all curriculum areas.
   (c) Utilization of an affective curriculum component that addresses learner self-image in a structured fashion.
   (d) Training of staff and administrators to support the reshaped school.
   (e) Training and utilization of parent scholars.

(pp. 10-11)

In the District's SIP, each school was required to follow a standard operational model which would include school based advisory councils, service support teams, parent scholars, and an integrated total staff effort. The district's long range goal suggested implementation of the SIP model in the majority of the city's public schools. "The resulting improvement of those schools will stimulate public confidence thereby enhancing the district's desegregation effort" (District's SIP Proposal, 1983, pp. 11-12).

The list of program objectives detailed by the district's proposal are summarized below:

A. To improve students' attitudes toward school ...

B. Improvement of students' performance in reading comprehension and mathematics computation on a standardized achievement test.

C. Improvement of students' performance in science and social studies on Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills.

D. A statistically significant improvement in staff morale and cooperation ...

E. An increase in school staff participation in voluntary and required activities.

F. To change the role of the principals to the extent that:
(1) there will be a statistically significant ($p < .10$) positive change in teachers' perceptions;
(2) principals will have plans, schedules, and other evidence of a regular, consistent effort as the instructional leaders of their schools.

G. To develop positive attitudes on the part of parents.

(SIP Proposal, pp. 13-15)

A tentative evaluation design (draft) was developed by the district's research, evaluation and planning unit. The evaluation design appeared to focus on the measurement of the above objectives. According to the district's SIP proposal (pp. 39-41), process evaluation via "ethnographic/participant observation techniques" would be utilized,

along with a summative evaluation of quantitative data from student achievement, and other outcome measures.

The above discussion suggests that the typical urban public school improvement initiative is associated with desegregation issues. Faced with the limited success of integrating African-Americans, Whites, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans into a quality educational environment, many urban public schools have developed a "Priority" status model. Such a model essentially seeks to focus added resources-personnel, funding, staff development, buildings' repairs, etc., on so-called racially isolated schools, i.e., schools where the student population has no (or a few) white students. These schools, historically as well as presently, rank lowest in student academic achievement, faculty morale, school climate, staff and student absences, suspensions and low community (parent) support of the educational programs.

The school improvement program components in this public school district are similar to the other urban school improvement projects which focus on: (a) staff development; (b) administrative leadership and teacher empowerment under the rubric of school improvement councils. School planning has become the foremost process that attempts to guide the schools' implementation efforts. At nearly every school organizational level, especially elementary schools (grades 1-6) and junior high/middle schools (grades 5/6-9), teachers and administrators meet, plan and produce a tangible document that serves as the blueprint for the upcoming school year. (Long-range planning also occurs.) The high schools' organizational structure preempts immediate application of the school effectiveness tenets.

While school planning is an integral part of the school improvement initiative, two problematic issues that detract from the optimism concerning the impact of projects are consistently low standardized test results, and limited parental involvement.

In an attempt to provide a holistic approach to the evaluation of school improvement projects, importance has been attached to school climate variables: student attendance; teacher attendance; student promotion rates; suspension rates; etc.

The educational research literature indicates that school climate, principal leadership, and effective teaching practices are associated with effective schools (see, e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Good and Brophy,1986). However, the dilemma of moving from theory - the abstract, to practice - applied knowledge, leading to workable solutions and school improvement remains the albatross of urban public school improvement initiatives.

The discussion in this section has provided an overview of the school improvement project in one urban public school system in the United States. The discussion to follow will illustrate the program evaluation results, to date, which have not yielded definitive findings to support the view that school improvement initiatives are effective.

Evaluation Results of A Major School Improvement Project

Students standardized test scores in the school system in which this case study occurred continued to show slight improvement over the last 2-3 years (Ayrer, 1988). However, when one isolates the twenty-four elementary and two junior high schools involved in the school improvement program, in addition to the approximately 52 elementary schools identified as Priority One, i.e., racially isolated and historically low achieving, the test results do not indicate overall academic improvement (see, e.g., McNamara, 1987). Also, parent involvement at Priority One schools continues to be a problem.

An analysis of school climate variables which were the initial focus of the school improvement councils indicated, at best, mixed results. The following is a synopsis of some of the school climate variables which were evaluated over a three year period (1985-1986-1987):

Staff Attendance

- Over the three year period (1984-1987), the teacher absence rate for the schools involved in the improvement program declined by 0.2% in 1986, and increased by 0.5% in 1987.

Student Attendance

- Student attendance decreased by 0.56% between 1985-86; and, it decreased by 1.86% between 1985-1987 for the schools involved in the school improvement program.

Student Suspension

. The schools involved in the improvement program had a higher suspension rate than the overall school district rate.

Student Withdrawals

. The student withdrawal rate, i.e., the number and percentage of students that left school, was slightly less than the School District's overall rate for the years 1984-1985 and 1985-1986.

Student Turnover

. The student turnover rate, i.e., the influx and migration of students in a given school, decreased in the school improvement project schools over the three year period 1984-1987.

The above school climate variables were analyzed within the context of twenty-six schools that participated in the school improvement project. The variables served as multiple indicators, and without a consideration of standardized test scores, the following question was posed: Is the project working, i.e., effective in regards to improved school climate at individual schools and the overall project?

The data trends indicated that while a worsening of school climate in the school improvement project schools was not a dominant feature (as it may have been without the program), no claims of improvement in the overall project can be determined from the data at this time (for a detailed discussion of the evaluation results, see, Pugh, 1988).

The literature on school improvement programs, and project implementation has suggested that a minimum of two-three years is necessary to begin to answer conclusively the question of project impact, i.e., implementation status (see, e.g., Hoy and Miskel, 1982). On the basis of the data trends and analysis made of this project, the following conclusion can be made: The District's school improvement project after three years has not become effective to a point of producing consistent improvements in school climate (or test results).

In other school districts in America, the findings on various school effectiveness/school improvement programs have yet to be established as a validation of the success of the effectiveness movement (see, e.g., Christner, 1987; Frechtling, 1987; Frechtling, et. al., 1984). While clearly there are promising signs in school improvement projects, the critical ingredient and resulting impediment to program success are implementation strategies. Applicable here, as Vandenberghe (1988) points out in his study of school improvement from a European perspective, "Policy-makers pay more attention to formation of the goals than to their implementation; they underestimate the difficulty and complexity of implementation" (p. 85).

The implementation process has received attention in the research literature. A myriad of issues have been suggested which impact on the implementation of a project (see, e.g., Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; McLaughlin, 1987; Newberg and DeLeone, 1981; Schlechty, 1976; Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977).

This section of the study of American urban public school improvement programs has provided a microanalysis of one system. The evaluation of the project suggested that claims about improvement are not possible. However, two significant points emerged and will be discussed in the next section: (1) Pockets of excellence do exist, i.e., success occurring within individual schools; and, (2) the issue of project implementation is critical to the prospects of success within school improvement programs. These latter two points will be discussed next, and framed within the context of policy implications and recommendations.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The analyses of the data trends and a synthesis of the school improvement research/evaluation literature suggest the following policy recommendations:

(1). School improvement programs must continue to emphasize and develop school-based leadership.

At individual schools, and within the entire project, leadership must be developed especially among school principals and teachers. School personnel, with assistance from central/district office staff, must be able to meet, discuss, and assess the program's status. As part of the school improvement planning process, specific strategies are needed that are unique to the individual settings. Such strategies and planning should be generated at the school level along with attempts to address issues related to the lack of improvement as well as what works (Coladarci and Donaldson, 1987; Gottfredson and Gottredson, 1987; Rosenholtz, 1985).

(2). The involvement of central office, e.g., research/evaluation personnel and curriculum specialists, along with other district offices' support, needs to occur, continue and possibly expand.

Consistent with the tenets that underlie school effectiveness and school improvement programs, the supportive role of the central and district offices is paramount (Cox, 1983; Eubanks and Levine, 1987; Huberman, 1983). Critical to the involvement of central and district offices staff is the need for well-defined roles. A coordinated and clearly defined level of involvement is necessary which recognizes the school-based leadership potential of teachers and principals. A unique staff development program that utilizes reflection-in-action, as well as ideas generated at the school level is imperative (see, e.g., Featherstone, 1986: Joyce, et. al., 1983; Rorshach and Whitney, 1986; Schon, 1983).

(3). Long-range administrative stability in the projects must be accomplished.

In evaluative studies on program implementation it is recognized that the occurrence of "executive shifts", i.e., upper level management changes, have impact of limiting the continuity of a project. As a result, implementation becomes potentially more difficult. Also, questions of "commitment" and upper level support may develop within the perspective of those at the school level. The necessity of communicating as well as limiting management changes must be considered as a factor affecting a project's success. In the case study, for

example, in spite of commitments by school principals to stay at their sites for the duration of the project, a number of principals transferred (for better school settings and/or increased salary based on school size, i.e., student enrollment); and, a number of key high-ranking central office project managers left the system, or were shifted to other areas of responsibility. While career changes and advancement are to be expected, a project's successful implementation will be hampered by "executive shifts" (see, e.g., Cohen, 1987; Freiberg, 1987).

(4). Recognition of "pockets of excellence" within school improvement projects should occur, and attempts at duplication/expansion effectuated.

One of the chief reoccurring themes in the research literature on school effectiveness/school improvement programs is the view that in spite of preliminary program results, based on test scores and other quantitative indicators which suggest limited overall program improvements, within school excellence is evident at some grade levels and/or within individual classrooms (Frechtling, 1987; Freiberg, 1987; Mandeville, 1987; Stringfield, 1987; Jones-Wilson, ed., 1988). Administrators need to build-on and expand exemplary practices thru collegial staff development, the master teacher concept, and/or focus group discussions within and across schools in such projects.

Future Directions (Concluding Comments)

This study has presented a perspective on urban public schools and the development of a school improvement initiative in a large urban municipality. First, there was a synthesis of the educational literature on school effectiveness/school improvement research and programs. A case study of a "typical" major American urban public school system was presented. The case study provided a contextual understanding of how school improvement programs developed in response to the need to address the historically low achieving status of so-called "racially isolated schools".

The evaluation findings which were discussed focused on the school improvement project in a large urban setting after three years of program operation. No definitive claims of improvement were suggested. The policy implications and recommendations that were developed based on the evaluation results indicate prospects for future success.

Wilson (1988) in his book, The Truly Disadvantaged, points out that the issue of helping the so-called "underclass" requires a multifacited agenda. Major American public school systems are initiating or expanding programs that address teen-pregnancy, drop-outs, illiteracy, unemployment, etc.

The school district in this case study has begun to focus on comprehensive services, i.e., pre-natal care, early childhood education, parenting skills coupled with adult literacy classes which utilize computer technology.

The future direction of school improvement programs also entails a focus on students' mental health. The "Comer Process" is receiving increased consideration. This process developed by James Comer at Yale University connects school planning with a mental health team, a school governance and management team, while initiating special projects for students, parents and teachers in a school climate conducive to learning (Comer, 1988).

At the high school level (grades 9-12), the urban public school system in this case study has begun to reorganize the schools into smaller (more manageable units - schools within schools). Junior high schools (grades 7-9) have all been converted to middle schools (grades 5/6-8), in an attempt to address the educational and social needs/development of adolescents.

Supplementary Services Centers, i.e., off-site buildings, are being planned near elementary schools (grades 1-6) which will focus on homework assistance and parent/community participation in the educational process. The involvement of major area colleges and universities, as well as the business community, has been solicited

by school systems. "Academically-based public service" is developing. The significance of urban universities working collaboratively with the school system and community, in a shared/responsible, and "non-hierarchical" manner offers tremendous potential for a reciprocal relationship among all parties. The concept of community centered schools is being given attention. This would involve the school building as a centerpiece for improving the community, as well as providing comprehensive services.

A significant national development that has recently occurred relative to school effectiveness/school improvement programs has been the restructuring of federal funding. Chapter I money (as it is termed) can now be used by urban school districts to provide low-achieving schools the latitude to direct supplementary services at any student who is deemed to be in need of additional academic assistance. No longer are students' family income (poverty level) and test scores (below the 16%ile) the sole criteria for Chapter I academic support.

This study suggests that America's major urban public school systems have made limited progress, to date, in achieving positive results based on the components of the school effectiveness research. However, problems related to project implementation and the truncated duration of programs have been chief contributors to this finding. In the school district discussed in this case study, the 20-26 schools in a special "pilot" school improvement program are now consumed under a new project entitled Priority 1. Approximately 50 other elementary and middle schools are also in the Priority 1 project.

In response to the limited progress achieved in the initial school improvement project in this urban school district, comprehensive and supplementary services are being piloted at a number of schools without the previous restrictions of government regulations. Building on the foundation and tenets of school effectiveness/school improvement research, the future of America's public school improvement efforts do show promise.

However, due to the public (and others) need for positive outcomes, the present American public schools' focus on improving the academic and social skills of the so-called "disadvantaged" is perhaps facing the final frontier in the school effectiveness movement. In the absence of demonstrative success within the present and future array of school improvement programs, America may have to adjust its expectations of public education.

> ...whether or not we will ever effectively teach the children of the poor is probably far more a matter of politics than of social science, and that is as it should be... We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do that. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.
>
> Edmonds, 1979

REFERENCES

Ayrer, J. (September, 1988). Spring 1988 citywide test information. School District of Philadelphia Memorandum. Philadelphia, Pa.: Office of Research, School District of Philadelphia.

Berman, P., & McLaughlin, M. (1978). Federal programs supporting educational change. Vol. VII: Implementing and sustaining innovations. Santa Monica, Ca.: Rand Corp.

Christner, C. (1987). Schoolwide Projects: The almost revolution (?) six years later. Paper presented at American Education Research Association (AERA) Conference, Washington, D.C.

Cohen, M. (1987). Teacher leadership and collaboration: key concepts and issues in school change. Paper presented at AERA Conference, Washington, D.C.

Coladarci, T., & Donaldson, J. (1987). Using school climate assessments: An approach to collaborative school improvement. Paper presented at AERA Conference, Washington, D.C.

Coleman, J., Campbell, E., et. al. (1966). Equality of Educational Opportunity. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Comer, J. (November, 1988). Educating poor minority children. Scientific American, (Piel, J., ed.), Vol. 259, No. 5, pp.42-48.

Cox, P. (November, 1983). Complementary roles in successful change. Educational Leadership, pp.10-14.

Edmonds, R. (1979). Some schools work and more can. Social Policy, (9), pp.28-32.

Eubanks, E., & Levine, D. (1987). Administrative and organizational arrangements and considerations. Educating Black Children: America's Challenge, (Strickland, D. & Cooper, E., eds.), Washington, D.C.: Howard University.

Featherstone, H. (July, 1986). The Harvard education letter. Vol. 11, No. 4. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press.

Frechtling, J. (1987). A school district prescriptive: questions that aren't being asked. Paper presented at AERA Conference, Washington, D.C.

Frechtling, J., Raber, S., & Ebert, M. (1984). A review of programs and strategies used in other American school systems for improving student achievement. Rockville, Md.: Montgomery County Public Schools.

Freiberg, H. J. (1987). A classroom process researcher's views of school effectiveness research. Paper presented at AERA Conference, Washington, D.C.

Good, T., & Brophy, J. (1986). Teacher behavior and student achievement. Handbook of Research on Teaching, 3rd edition, (Wittrock, M., ed.). New York: MacMillan Publishing Co.

Gottfredson, G., & Gottfredson, D. (1987). Using organization development to improve school climate. Paper presented at AERA Conference, Washington, D.C.

Harvard Educational Review, (February, 1973). Perspectives on inequality: A reassessment of family and schooling in America. Vol. 43, No. 1.

Hoy, W. & Miskel, C. (1982). Educational Administration: Theory, Research & Practice. New York: Random House.

Huberman, M. (November, 1983). School improvement strategies that work. Educational Leadership. Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 23-27.

International Journal of Qualitative Studies In Education, (January-March, 1988). (Webb, R. & Sherman, R., eds.), Vol. 1, Philadelphia, Pa.: Taylor & Francis Publishers.

Jencks, C., et. al., (1972). Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America. New York: Basic Books.

Jensen, A., (1969). How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement? Harvard Educational Review. (39), pp. 1-123.

Jick, T., (December, 1979). Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triagulation in action. Administrative Science Quarterly. Vol. 24, pp. 602-612.

Joyce, B., Hersh, R., & McKibbin, M., (1983). The Structure of School Improvement. New York: Long Man, Inc.

Kidder, L., & Fine, M., (Fall, 1987). Qualitative and Quantitative methods: When stories converge. Issues In Education, (Finkelstien, B., ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, Vol. 35, pp. 57-77.

Kliebard, H., (1987). The Struggle For The American Curriculum 1893-1958. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

McLaughlin, M., (Summer, 1987). Learning from experience: Lesson from policy implication. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis. (Guthrie, J., ed.), Washington, D.C.: AERA Publication, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 171-179.

McNamara, T. (September, 1987). End of year report on the priority one initiative. Unpublished report, Philadelphia, Pa.: Office of Research, School District of Philadelphia.

Miller, S., (1983). The history of effective schools research: A critical overview. ERIC Document 231-181.

Moynihan, D., (1965) The Negro Family: The Case for National Action. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Policy Planning and Research.

Newberg, N., & DeLeone, R., (August, 1981). The bureaucratic milieu. Education and Urban Society. Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 445-458.

Pugh, W., (1986). A typology of instructional leadership practices. Ph.D. Dissertion. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania.

Pugh, W., (May, 1988). An analysis of multiple indicators to evaluate school improvement projects. Paper presented at the Eastern Evaluation Research Society, Eleventh Annual Conference, Villanova, Pa.

Rorshach, E., & Whitney, R., (Winter, 1986). Relearning to teach: Peer observation as a means of professional development. American Educator. (McPike, E., ed.), Vol. 10, Nov. 4, pp. 38-44.

Schlechty, P., (1976). Teaching and Social Behavior: Toward an Organizational Theory of Instruction. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Schon, D., (1983). The Reflective Practitioner. New York: Basic Books.

Stringfield, S., & Tedlie, C., (1987). A time to summarize: Six years and three phases of the Louisiana school effectiveness study. Paper presented at the AERA Conference, Washington, D.C.

Teacher's College Record. (Soltis, J., ed.), Fall, 1984). Vol. 86, No. 1. New York: Columbia University.

Vandenberghe, R., (January-March, 1988). School improvement from a European perspective. International Journal of Qualitative Studies In Education. (Webb, R. & Sherman, R., eds.) Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, Vol. 1, No. 1 pp. 79-91.

Weatherley, R., & Lipsky, M., (May, 1977). Street level bureaucrats and institutional innovation: Implementing Special education reform. Harvard Educational Review. Vol. 47, pp. 171-197.

Weber, G. (1971). Inner-City Children Can Be Taught To Read: Four Successful Schools. Washington, D.C.: Council for Basic Education.

Wilson, F. C., (editor), (Summer, 1988). Urban schools that work. The Journal of Negro Education. Vol. 57, No. 3. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press.